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The Foundations of a New Brazil

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The Foundations of a New Brazil

J.M. Pinheiro-Neto

Abstract

It looks as if Brazil has found herself, finally. To have a law journal such as the Fordham International Law Journal dedicate one of its five yearly issues to a newly-elected president of a Latin American country is homage in itself. The fact that the chosen country is Brazil would have to be considered by the Brazilians as a meritorious decision. Further, to have a man like our new President, Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, as the focus of the Journal's attention is certainly interesting.

INTRODUCTION

THE FOUNDATIONS OF A NEW BRAZIL

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It looks as if Brazil has found herself, finally. To have a law journal such as the *Fordham International Law Journal* dedicate one of its five yearly issues to a newly-elected president of a Latin American country is homage in itself. The fact that the chosen country is Brazil would have to be considered by the Brazilians as a meritorious decision. Further, to have a man like our new President as the focus of the *Journal's* attention is certainly interesting.

My life span embraces nearly eighty years. Belonging to a middle-class family I can easily remember the way we lived when I was young. We knew then, as we know now (because it is engraved in our National Anthem) that we were, as a country, a "sleeping giant." When I was young this unfortunate statement was always taken as a joke. What is it like now, so many years afterwards?

For once in my lifetime I can say without irony that, all things being equal, we are ready to take off. So it seems, at least to me. I have to consider Brazil within the framework of the civilized world, and I also have to consider how my country could fit into the rapid development that the world will go through in the coming millennium. This, guided by a new man, apparently free from the shackles that imposed themselves on our political life for so long, is a good omen.

Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso is a sociologist, I am told. Seeing his picture always in front of me, either in the press or on television, I feel he talks too much and smiles too much. He reasons well, however, and knows how to say what he wants to say. Further, he is able to convince people that his views are correct. If one were to consider common wisdom, and to judge Mr. Cardoso by the company he keeps, there is no doubt that he has chosen men of ability to help and advise him. How long this

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will last is difficult to say, but our President does have the goodwill of most thinking people.

How many thinking people are there in Brazil? Not many, I venture. We are all (nearly all) beset by ideas that have grown with us for generations. We want steady pay (preferably as government employees), as little work as possible, many holidays, and political parties. We want our "rights" far more than we are willing to accept our "obligations." I am convinced that this is true, but fortunately, it is not the whole truth. There are many, many people in my country that are quite different, many that consider work as being a fact of life, many that would like to earn their advancement, and many more that would support a President with the right ideas and purposes for his country. This is why, as with a great majority of my people, I am confident that the future will give Brazil its deserved position in the next scenario of the world such as we know it.

By sheer weight of figures, we are in the forefront. How is the new President going to transform that in order to bring us to the forefront of influence?

Mr. Cardoso should be able, in his four years as President, to change the basic concept of life of a Brazilian. By providing us with stable rules, reasonable laws, and the will to work, grow, and be better, he will have laid the foundations on which to build the country of our dreams. We are not afraid to work, as is so well known when there is a job to be performed and the result of our effort becomes ours for the most part. We are just as intelligent, and diligent, as so many others. What we do not have to a sufficient extent is the identity of people with their country. No one goes out every day thinking of his or her country, saying to himself that with this in mind he will do better today than he did yesterday. These are not thoughts of the normal person, but the gut feeling that it is worthwhile to strive ahead is essential in the people of any country in the world. If Fernando Henrique Cardoso not only gives us that, but also leads us on this path, in the four years of his tenure he will have transformed Brazil into the country we should be. I wish him all success.